THE UNSWERVING LAW

A DRAMA OF REINCARNATION

YOUTH LODGE

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THE UNSWERVING LAW

A DRAMA OF REINCARNATION
IN ONE ACT
BY

YOUTH LODGE LONDON
of the Theosophical Society in England

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NOTE

THIS play is an attempt to teach the doctrine of reincarnation through drama, by following through the centuries the working out of a violation of one of the basic Laws of the Universe. Its production is greatly improved by the introduction of incidental music during both the speeches by Isis, with the same slow, recurrent theme repeated softly during the intervals between the scenes.

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD

THIS play is one of a series of seven, each presenting in dramatic form one or more of the fundamental principles of the Ancient Wisdom-Religion or Theosophy. The plays are all short and simple, needing no scenery, few characters or properties, and only a very small stage.

They have been written to overcome the two main difficulties that face the increasing number of Drama Groups now appearing all over the world within the Theosophical Movement. Firstly, there is a dearth of short Theosophical plays of any kind, and secondly, the performance of such plays as there are usually entails the payment of substantial royalties. By arrangement with the publishers, therefore, the plays in this series may be performed throughout the world, in public or privately, free of charge. At the same time, it is hoped that the spirit of this concession will be respected, and that no individual will attempt to make money out of the production of the plays. To this end the authors of the series have retained all rights of production in their own hands, and all applications and inquiries about production should be made to me, c/o the publishers.

The first two plays in the series are now on sale. Three more are ready for publication, while the remaining two are being written. It rests with the public to decide if and when the other five will be published, as the appearance of further plays will naturally depend on the reception afforded these two. Those readers, therefore, who see in this series an attempt to supply a long-felt want, and at the same time to open up a new field of Theosophical propaganda, will have it in their own hands to decide whether the outcome of our venture be failure or success.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

PROLOGUE. ISIS, *Queen of Heaven.*

SCENE I

A GIRL ATTENDANT

AMOUTSOU. . . . *A young Egyptian.*

ISINIS . . . . *A working Girl.*

KANEF . . . . *A young Egyptian.*

A HIGH PRIESTESS OF ISIS

SCENE II

AN ATTENDANT

ANTONIUS, MARIUS . . . . *Young Patricians.*

AN OLD WOMAN SLAVE-DEALER

SICILIA . . . . *A Slave.*

MONA . . . . *A Fortune-teller.*

SCENE III

AN OLD LADY

CYNTHIA . . . . *A young Girl, her Niece.*

A MAID

MARK, TONY . . . . *Young Brothers, Cousins of Cynthia.*

EPILOGUE: ISIS, *Queen of Heaven.*

SCENES I.—*The Temple of Isis at Thebes.*

II.—*An ante-room in the Imperial Palace at Rome.*

III.—*A drawing-room in London to-day.*

THE UNSWERVING LAW

PROLOGUE

The Curtain is half drawn up, and in the aperture is seen the figure of Isis *on her throne. She is facing the audience, very upright, her hands on her knees. The light is dim, and, like her robes, blue and green in colour. She is dressed in the robes of Isis. Her speech, slowly and impressively delivered, is accompanied by soft music off.*

Isis. Ye wonder who I am.

Give ear, and ye shall know. For I am Isis, Queen of Heaven, and the ever-virgin Mother of the lives of men. Ye know me not to-day, yet once ye knew me, when the fierce sun of Egypt beat upon your bodies by the ever-flowing Nile. To-day, the cold grey mists of England lie about your hearts, and I, who ever was, and am, and shall be, rise before ye only as the vision of an unremembered day.

Yet are ye all but children of the Past, the product and resultant of your every lightest thought and deed committed in the countless lives that lie behind ye now. Have I not watched ye all, as age succeeded age, I who am one, though men have worshipped me by many names. Kwan-Yin they call me—it is good. Mary, Holy Mother, is their cry—'tis one to me. For I am Woman, virgin wife and mother of my first-born Man, who draws his very life-blood from my heart; who plays with foolish toys about my feet; who laughs and cries and hurts himself, and turns to me with childish faith to heel the bruises and the blows of circumstance.

Time was the Gods were human, when the world was young and ye were fungus by a forest pool. But now, those striving units of evolving life that hugged their blindness, shouting "I am I," are merged in That from which they came, and are but part and parcel of unswerving Law.

Give ear, ye parents of the yet-to-be. By law ye live, by law it is ye die. Law made ye what ye are, law moulds what ye shall be. A thousand million years have ye, and others like ye, for the Law is one, sought vainly through this Universe of life—for what ? For nook or cranny, cave or desert isle, that was not swathed and girt about, enwrapped and cradled in unswerving Law. Hearken, ye scattered fragments of the mighty All, and know that Life is One, its myriad aspects knit together by the Law of laws, the sacred Law of Love. Love *is* the Law, as only Woman knows, and violation of that Law is more than criminal, is more than sin, 'tis foolishness. Who hurts another hurts himself. Who slays his brother stabs the life within. Such is the Law, the one and only Law, that as ye sow ye reap, 'til in the round of time ye one and all become that Law, for love is the fulfilling of the Law, and ye and Love are one.

Ye look, as ye have ever looked, incredulous, amazed. In that I speak in paradox ye do not understand. 'Twas ever so. But, though the ear be deaf, maybe the eye can see. Look, then, upon this stage, this symbol of a greater stage whereon is played that drama-comedy ye know as Life. Watch, then, this presentation of Eternal Law, even as we are witness to your own dramatic talent in that Play wherein each actor writes his part, or good or ill, or great or small, and draws his pay accordingly.

Watch well. The tragedy enacted here is brother to your own. The stage is but a mirror of the watcher's mind. Watch, then, that ye may understand—and having understood, obey.

CURTAIN

SCENE I

Interior of the Temple of Isis at Thebes.

Centre Back an entrance through curtains. Left, across corner, an altar, on which is a statue of Isis, oil-lamp, incense-burner, etc. GIRL ATTENDANT *discovered lighting incense. She is young, and simply dressed in white. Enter R. fiercely,* AMOUTSOU. *He is young and simply dressed. Now excited and breathless.*

AMOUTSOU. (*From doorway.*) Which way did she go ?

ATTENDANT. (*Turning round.*) I don't understand. Who is " she " ?

AMOUTSOU. That girl. You must have seen her.

ATTENDANT. I saw no girl. None has been here this hour past save I.

AMOUTSOU. But you must have seen her. Isinis, where are you ? I want you. (*Begins to search room.*)

ATTENDANT. Isinis ! So you are one of the precious pair, are you ?

AMOUTSOU. (*Angrily.*) What do you mean, " precious pair " ? What precious pair ?

ATTENDANT. As if all Thebes had not heard of your everlasting squabbles with Kanef. It's the finest free entertainment that we've known for years. And it never seems to have occurred to either of you that Isinis wants neither of you !

AMOUTSOU. Hold you tongue. I love her and she loves me, and by Amen I will have her.

ATTENDANT. (*Drily.*) That's what Kanef says, but you can't both have her. Still, knowing the tempers you both have, I feel more sorry for him that wins than for him that loses.

AMOUTSOU. What do you mean ?

ATTENDANT. You know quite well what I mean. There was a time when your rivalry for the loveliest girl in Thebes was amusing for us and a compliment to Isinis which she was the first to appreciate. Then from com-

petition you passed to warfare, and friendly rivalry became open enmity.

AMOUTSOU. Well? I was the first to tell her of my love, and if Kanef——

ATTENDANT. Love! If it had been love, all might have been well. Love does not breed hatred—desire does. (*Turns back to altar.*)

AMOUTSOU. And what if I do hate him? Why has he tried to steal my Isinis away from me? (*Through his teeth.*) If I could lay my hands on him to-night . . .

ATTENDANT. (*Turning back.*) Exactly! So we come back to the point where we began, that when Isinis makes her choice I am more sorry for the winner than the loser. And now please go. I have more important things to do than arguing with a quarrelsome, lovesick boy.

AMOUTSOU. I don't move from here until I find Isinis.

ATTENDANT. And I tell you to go now. The High Priestess herself will be here any moment.

AMOUTSOU. Oh, very well. (*He turns to go. As he does so, enter* ISINIS, *but seeing* AMOUTSOU, *she turns to fly. He seizes her wrist.*) Stay, Isinis, it is I, thy lover.

ISINIS. You are not my lover. Let me go. (*Struggling.*) Let me go.

AMOUTSOU. That will I not, for I tell you I love you. Stay with me now, thou desire of my heart, and to-night we will fly from Thebes for ever. Oh, Isinis, how I love you!

ISINIS. (*Struggling anew.*) But I do *not love you.* Let me go.

AMOUTSOU. Nay, but you will learn to love me soon. Your father looks with favour on my suit and will give us money when we return to him and ask his forgiveness, and when he dies he will leave us all he has. Then we shall be rich and happy, you and I, Isinis. Let me kiss you now, as a pledge of our love.

(*He puts his arms round her, trying to kiss her. She puts her hand over her mouth to prevent him. Enter* KANEF *R. Seeing the pair, he is furious.*)

KANEF. You dog of a Jew! Let her go! How dare you! . . .

ATTENDANT. (*Advancing on them.*) Begone the two of you. Is the Temple of the Queen of Heaven a fit battle-ground for jealous lovers? Go, I say, and you, too, Isinis. (*She tries to push them out, but they push her aside and the quarrel grows.*)

AMOUTSOU. (*Pushing her back towards altar.*) Stand aside, girl, lest you be hurt. (*To* KANEF.) As for you, Kanef, know that you are too late.

KANEF. (*Furiously.*) The girl is mine.

AMOUTSOU. Too late, my friend, I tell you she has pledged herself to me.

ISINIS. You lie—(*breaking away*)—for I hate you! (*To* KANEF.) *And* you. You neither of you love me, you just desire me, partly for my body, but more for my father's gold, and yet you go shouting my name all over Thebes until I am the laughing-stock of the city. I won't have it. I hate you both. Let me pass. (*She makes for the door, but* AMOUTSOU *stops her, and tries to take her in his arms again.*)

AMOUTSOU. Listen to me, Isinis.

KANEF. Take your hands off her, or I'll find a means of making you.

ISINIS. Will you stop quarrelling about me. If either of you had the least affection for me you would consider my view in the matter. As it is, you fight over me as if I were a nugget of gold that someone had dropped unnoticed in the street.

ATTENDANT. Well said, Isinis.

KANEF. Well said as far as Amoutsou is concerned. All he cares for is her father's gold.

AMOUTSOU. That's not true, Isinis. (*Taking her hands.*) Say you know it is not true.

KANEF. Take your hands off her, you spawn of the gutter.

AMOUTSOU. I tell you she is mine, or soon will be. At least she never will be yours. You don't deserve her.

KANEF. That we shall see. Stand aside. (*He seizes* AMOUTSOU *by the shoulder and tries to pull him back.* AMOUTSOU *flings him off, whereat* KANEF *draws knife.* ATTENDANT *tries to separate them.* ISINIS *screams and steps back R.* PRIESTESS *appears silently in doorway Centre Back.*) There does not appear to be room on earth for both of us. (*Stabs* AMOUTSOU, *who falls.*) And I tell you it is I that will remain.

AMOUTSOU. (*On the ground, with difficulty.*) One day, one day, you will remember this. (*Dies.* ISINIS *comes forward and kneels over him, facing altar.* KANEF *shrinks back down R., dropping knife.* ATTENDANT *backs towards altar, whimpering. All three watch* PRIESTESS, *who silently crosses to altar, having watched the whole scene without a word. She adds fresh incense to the flame, and, raising her arms, invokes the Goddess.*)

PRIESTESS. O Queen of Heaven, Virgin Mother of our Land, avert thine eyes from this foul deed of blood, lest this, the temple sacred to thy name, be cursed in thy sight. (*Turning back and gazing coldly at all.*) Let the slayer stand forth. (*To* 1ST EGYPTIAN, *as he raises his head.*) O foolish and unhappy man. This hour is forged a bond of hate that only love shall loosen. Hot jealousy, black hatred, and a deed of blood. Poor human frailty! The law is broken, and the murderer must pay, in this life and in lives to come. Life after life shall ye three meet again 'til hatred dies before the face of love, for hatred ceaseth not by hatred, hatred ceaseth but by love. So runs the Law, the ancient and unswerving Law, that as ye sow, ye reap. Life after life shall ye be born again, bound by the blasphemy of hatred to the pitiless wheel of Law, until ye learn, thou and the brother thou didst slay, until ye learn the Law.

(1ST EGYPTIAN, *conscience-stricken, drags himself to her feet, and kneels before her in misery.*)

1ST EGYPTIAN. Curse me not, thou voice of destiny. I am but young and foolish, swept from off my feet by gusts of passion. . . .

PRIESTESS. When thou hast learnt that human passion is the father of all evil thou wilt realise that thou, not passion, art the rightful ruler of thy life. (*He tries to plead, she stops him.*) Enough. Now go.

1ST EGYPTIAN. But they will kill me.

PRIESTESS. What then ? The sentence of thy fellow men can only touch thy body. But the sentence of the Gods, the ruling of the Higher Law, is neither merciless nor merciful, but utterly, unutterably, just, and every thought and feeling of thy heart and mind shall be judged accordingly. Remember, in the years to come, thou hapless child of passion, hatred ceaseth not by hatred, hatred ceaseth but by love. Think well on this, and act accordingly. And now, in the name of Isis, depart in peace. (*To* GIRL ATTENDANT.) Have the dead removed and let the living leave me. (*As they prepare to obey she turns back to the altar and begins to intone under her breath.*)

CURTAIN

SCENE II

Ante-room of Imperial Palace, Rome.

Centre Back an entrance through curtains from interior of Palace. Right ditto from courtyard. Left across corner, where altar was in Scene I., a chair. ATTENDANT *discovered on duty Left Centre Back. Enter Right* ANTONIUS. *He is a youthful patrician, clothed in a purple-edged white toga over a coloured tunic, and sandals with coloured thongs round his ankles. His hair is beautifully brushed.*

ANTONIUS. (*To* ATTENDANT.) Have you seen an old woman in charge of a slave-girl waiting for me here ?

ATTENDANT. They await you in the courtyard, Lord.

ANTONUIS. Excellent. Bring them to me here. The summer sun outside is most exhausting.

(*Exit* ATTENDANT *R. Enter* MARIUS *Centre Back. He, too, is young and dressed in the same style as* ANTONIUS.)

MARIUS. (*L. of* ANTONIUS.) Well met, Antonius. I trust the Gods are smiling on you.

ANTONIUS. As on you, Marius. As it happens, the Gods have just favoured me with the loveliest slave in Rome. Never have I seen such loveliness, such beauty incarnate in a woman's form. Since the very hour when I first set eyes on her I have felt as if some unseen power, some strange, magnetic force were drawing me to her, until all other women, aye, even the fairest of my chosen slaves, were as nothing to me. Oh, if I could only describe to you how wonderful she is ! I feel——

MARIUS. (*Yawning, and crossing to chair.*) Yes, Antonius, what do you feel ?

ANTONIUS. I feel as if all my life 'til now has been but years of nothingness, waiting, waiting, until she came. And now that she has come, now that she is mine . . . but you shall see her, Marius. She is here even now. I have sent for her.

MARIUS. (*In a bored voice.*) I shall be delighted to inspect a pearl of such price. May I know her name ?

ANTONIUS. She is called Sicilia, after the island where she was born.

MARIUS. (*Jumping up.*) Sicilia ! She is mine. I bought her of the old woman by the Gate of Ostia for 7,000 sestercii.

ANTONIUS. Impossible ! I was promised her a week ago for 10,000 sestercii, and sent a note but yesterday to have her brought to me here this morning.

MARIUS. (*Chuckling.*) Too late, my friend, for she is mine. I paid depositum for her at the ninth hour to-day. (*Slapping* ANTONIUS *on the back.*) Cheer up, Antonius. She is not the only little pearl in Rome, though I vow by Jupiter she is the loveliest. Now I understand your poetic outburst, for she is worth it all, and more. Unfortunately I feel the same, and great as is my affection for you, Antonius, in this matter alone I keep what is mine.

ANTONIUS. But this is monstrous ! I tell you she is not yours. She is mine. But we will soon settle this.

(*Claps hands.*) Ho, there! (*Enter Right* ATTENDANT.) Is the old woman there?

MARIUS. (*Slily.*) And Sicilia?

ATTENDANT. They are both here, Lord.

(*Enter* OLD WOMAN *and* SICILIA *R. The former is dressed in a weird assortment of garments, and is a loathsome specimen of unctuous servility. The girl is simply dressed in a coloured tunic, bare feet and her hair down. She is a shy, timid creature. Exit* ATTENDANT *Centre Back.*)

ANTONIUS. Woman, this girl is mine. You promised her to me a week since.

OLD WOMAN. (*Wheedling.*) Most noble Lord, it is true you said you *might* give me 10,000 sestercii in a week's time *if* you had the money, but this beautiful gentleman—(*indicating* MARIUS)—came to me at the ninth hour to-day and offered me 7,000 there and then, and gave me gold by way of earnest, and I being a poor woman and——

ANTONIUS. But this is monstrous, damnable! Is there no law in this country, no justice, no——

MARIUS. You have it on paper, no doubt, complete with witnesses? (*Chuckles maliciously.*)

ANTONIUS. On paper? Witnesses? Is not my word sufficient, you treacherous old hag?

OLD WOMAN. Be not annoyed, most gracious gentleman. I have other slaves as lovely as Sicilia if you will deign to look at them.

ANTONIUS. I tell you I want Sicilia, and by all the Gods of Olympus, I will have her. (*To* MARIUS, *losing his temper.*) You lying, treacherous scoundrel to——

MARIUS. Have a care, Antonius. There are limits to the power of friendship.

ANTONIUS. Friendship? A pretty form of friendship! You thief, you dog, you—— (*Threatening* MARIUS.)

OLD WOMAN. Gentlemen, gentlemen, if you cannot decide yourselves which of you is to have her—(*leering*)—and I grant you she is worth a few high words—let her speak for herself.

MARIUS. A brilliant thought. (ANTONIUS *sulkily acquiesces.*) Come, Sicilia, which is it to be ? Will you be mine, or will you go with our bright little friend Antonius ? (SICILIA, *R. of* OLD WOMAN, *cringes back timidly.*)

OLD WOMAN. Speak up, little one. These gentlemen are waiting for you.

SICILIA. I fear them both, and want nothing so much as to return to my home.

ANTONIUS. (*Impatiently.*) The choice, the choice.

SICILIA. Then will I choose—(MARIUS *comes a step nearer, almost menacingly*)—this gentleman. (*Pointing to* MARIUS. *Crosses to him.*)

MARIUS. (*Triumphantly.*) A victory ! (*Puts an arm round her.*)

ANTONIUS. (*Furiously.*) You little vixen !

MARIUS. (*All smiles.*) Do not address my slave in that way.

ANTONIUS. (*To* MARIUS, *flaring up again.*) Is this your idea of friendship ? (*Advancing on him.*) Then this is how I regard your friendship.

(*Enter C. back unnoticed by* ANTONIUS, ATTENDANT. MARIUS *seeing him.*)

MARIUS. Antonius ! Are you mad, to start a vulgar brawl in the very Palace itself ?

(ANTONIUS *checks himself.*)

ATTENDANT. The most serene Augustus desires your presence, Lord.

MARIUS. Mine ?

ATTENDANT. Even so, Lord.

MARIUS. But . . . I don't understand. Why this peremptory summons, this—command ? (*Looks vaguely from one to another, then back to* ATTENDANT.) Is that all your message ?

ATTENDANT. That is all, Lord.

MARIUS. How is his countenance ?

ATTENDANT. As the thunder-sky.

MARIUS. Is he alone ?

ATTENDANT. Alone with the Empress, the Captain of the Guard, and two soldiers in charge of a manacled slave-girl.

MARIUS. (*Struck with a thought.*) Her name? Tell me her name.

ATTENDANT. They referred to her as Myrrha, Lord.

MARIUS. May the Gods be with me! (*He turns to* ANTONIUS, *but seeing his expressionless face, turns back to* ATTENDANT *again.*) Lead on. (*To* ANTONIUS.) Until we meet again, Antonius, farewell.

(*Exeunt* ATTENDANT *and* MARIUS *Centre Back.*)

ANTONIUS. (*Puzzled.*) What does all this mean?

SICILIA. (*Running up to him.*) What does it matter, dear Lord? (*Coyly.*) If he does not return, you will still have me.

ANTONIUS. (*Pleased with the thought, fondling her.*) Aye, I shall then have you. (*To* OLD WOMAN.) Tell me of her parentage.

OLD WOMAN. She was born of an Egyptian slave in Sicilia, most noble Lord, hence her name. Her father, on the other hand, was——

(*Re-enter* ATTENDANT *Centre Back.*)

ANTONIUS. Well?

ATTENDANT. A message from Marius.

ANTONIUS. A message? Why a message? Why does he not come in person?

ATTENDANT. Because he is no longer free. He has been placed in the hands of the Captain of the Guard by order of the Emperor.

ANTONIUS. For what offence? What is your message?

ATTENDANT. I am asked to request you to remember certain youthful exploits performed five years ago by you and Marius with the aid of a certain slave-girl name Myrrha.

ANTONIUS. *That* Myrrha! Now I remember. And she has opened her lips?

ATTENDANT. She was suspected by the Empress, put to the torture, and confessed all.

ANTONIUS. Was my name mentioned ?

ATTENDANT. Apparently not, sir.

(*Sigh of relief from* ANTONIUS.)

ANTONIUS. Well, and what does Marius require me to do ?

ATTENDANT. He requires you to come at once and give the evidence that alone can clear him of the charge now made against him.

ANTONIUS. Which is ?

ATTENDANT. He says that the crime was in your eyes and his a trivial one, a boyish escapade, but that upon it has been built up a charge the penalty of which is death. Your evidence alone, he says, can save him from that penalty.

ANTONIUS. So this is the freedom Cæsar promised us when Rome became an Empire. That every childish prank may be twisted at the instance of a jealous woman—aye, even though she be an Empress—into a capital offence. (*After a pause.*) Howbeit, in the name of friendship, even though it mean that I shall probably run my neck into the same noose, I suppose . . . (*Catching sight of* SICILIA.) Sicilia, suppose that Marius should not return, would you be satisfied with me ?

SICILIA. (*Coyly.*) Have I not said so, Lord ?

ANTONIUS. (*After a moment's hesitation, to* ATTENDANT.) Is Mona the fortune-teller in the Palace ?

ATTENDANT. I will seek her, Lord.

(*Exit* ATTENDANT *Centre Back.* ANTONIUS *paces up and down. Then to* OLD WOMAN *and* SICILIA.)

ANTONIUS. If you will wait in the courtyard I will send for you in a moment.

(*Exeunt* OLD WOMAN *and* SICILIA *Right.*)

(*After a pause enter* MONA *Centre Back, followed by* ATTENDANT. *She is an old woman with a slight stoop and a very quiet manner. She is slow both of movement and of speech.*)

MONA. As I was passing I was told that some one wanted me. (*Peering round. Then to* ANTONIUS.) I

think it is you, Lord, who require my services. Am I right ?

ANTONIUS. Yes, it is I who want you, Mona. (*To* ATTENDANT.) You may go. (*Exit* ATTENDANT.) Be seated. (*She sits down.*) Listen. My friend is in peril of his life. If I speak he lives, though perhaps I die. If I remain silent he dies, and I live. If he lives he takes a certain slave whom I desire. If he dies she is mine. How say you that I shall decide ?

MONA. This friend is truly a friend ?

ANTONIUS. He was until this girl crossed our lives. Tell me, thou reader of the stars, I have had many women in my time, for I am rich, and my slaves are the loveliest in Rome. But never have I known this strange magnetic power that draws me to this girl, almost as it were against my will. I do not understand.

MONA. Give me your ring. (*He takes it off and gives it her. She holds it to her forehead, then in her lap with her eyes shut.*)

ANTONIUS. (*Running on.*) And why should this girl wake within me for my friend Marius a feeling that I have never known before, a vague . . . antagonism ? Oft have we bid against one another in the slave market, or wooed the self-same girl in friendly rivalry, but now——

MONA. This is not the first time you and he have quarrelled about a girl with something more than " friendly rivalry." And it was this same girl.

ANTONIUS. There you are wrong for I had never seen her until a week ago.

MONA. There *you* are wrong, for I tell you that you have met before, all three of you, in Egypt . . . and then again in Egypt, and, what is more, you will all three meet again, many times, life after life, until one of you breaks the link of hatred that at present binds you as one.

ANTONIUS. Hatred ?

MONA. Born of rivalry for the possession of this girl. Yours is the choice this time, whether you kill your friend or no.

ANTONIUS. I kill him? Never! I may perchance——

MONA. Let him die. It is all one on the knees of the Gods. Until one of you breaks the link between you, you will meet again and again until one of you learns the lesson you have got to learn. This time it happens that the opportunity is yours. Choose between your friend and the girl. I cannot help you.

ANTONIUS. But you must. Tell me how to decide.

(MONA *again puts the ring to her forehead for a moment in silence, then looks up.*)

MONA. It is useless. I tell you it is your decision. Choose the wheel of rebirth with this girl to keep you company, or the claims of friendship—and freedom. The Gods await your decision.

(ANTONIUS *paces up and down, then suddenly comes to a decision.*)

ANTONIUS. So be it. You may go. I trust the ring will be sufficient recompense?

MONA. Thank you, Lord.

(*Exit* MONA, *shuffling slowly across stage to Centre Back exit, while* ANTONIUS *claps his hands. Enter Centre Back* ATTENDANT. *He meets* MONA, *waits to let her pass and then comes down L. of* ANTONIUS.

ANTONIUS. Take this message to Marius. Tell him from me——

(*Meanwhile* OLD WOMAN *and* SICILIA *have entered Right.*)

OLD WOMAN. You clapped your hands for me, Lord?

ANTONIUS (*Looking at* SICILIA.) No, but it is no matter. Sicilia! (*She runs up to him. He holds her for a moment, then speaking to* ATTENDANT *without taking his eyes off* SICILIA.) Take this message to Marius from me. Tell him . . . that I have nothing to say.

CURTAIN

SCENE III

A London drawing-room.

Centre Right, an entrance through curtains. Centre Left a small sofa across corner, with arms, containing a little old lady in evening dress. To her Right two more chairs. R., down stage of door, a small table with flowers. A girl in black evening dress is discovered arranging them. She is young and pretty, but at the moment upset.

OLD LADY. Now sit down, dear, and try to rest. You will only tire yourself out for nothing. I want to hear the exact terms of the will. Your father told me before he died that he had made ample provision for you, as he had no one in the world but you to provide for.

CYNTHIA. I know, Auntie. I'm not worrying about money. It's——

OLD LADY. Well, dear, what is it ? Not those two boys worrying you already ?

CYNTHIA. Not worrying me exactly. They are both very sympathetic and good to me, especially Tony, but you see, dear old Dad, in his efforts to do his best for me, has put me in a very awkward position. (*Sits down.*)

OLD LADY. (*Settling down to listen.*) Tell me what happened at the solicitor's office this afternoon. Who was there ?

CYNTHIA. Mark and Tony and I and the solicitor's clerk—that was all. That's all the family there is left, except you. We just sat round while the clerk read the will to us. What it all apparently comes to is that practically the whole of the money comes to me, and it's a lot. But Dad couldn't refrain from hinting that he had always hoped that when the time came I should marry "one of his dear nephews, Antony and Mark" ! Which is all very well as a pious hope, but put on paper in a will like that makes it very embarrassing for all three of us. What's more, it must lead to—well—rivalry between them !

OLD LADY. Are they both very much in love with you ?

CYNTHIA. Yes, that's the trouble. Of course, Mark's wooing would be comic if he wasn't so serious, but he's a dear thing all the same.

OLD LADY. And Tony ?

CYNTHIA. He puzzles me. In a way he's quite as fond of me as Mark, but, I don't know—he's a funny boy. He gets such funny ideas. For instance, he suddenly asked me one day while Dad was so ill whether I believed in reincarnation.

OLD LADY. And you said ?

CYNTHIA. I said I hadn't thought about it. Then he told me he had been reading a lot about that sort of thing lately, and he'd got a curious idea that Mark and he and I had all—met before somewhere, in another life, and that the more or less friendly rivalry between them for me, which none of us had taken seriously up to then, was based on a terrible hatred between them in the past.

OLD LADY. Go on.

CYNTHIA. That's all. He's a funny boy.

OLD LADY. And you are equally fond of both ?

CYNTHIA. (*Smiling.*) More or less. I suppose I shall have to make up my mind soon. They both told me they would be coming up here to-night to—er—inquire after my health.

OLD LADY. Well, my dear, it's your choice, and may you choose well ! Here's someone now.

(*Enter* MAID.)

MAID. Mr. Mark, madam. (*Enter* MARK. *He is young, in evening dress, with no sense of humour, and a slightly aggressive manner. Exit* MAID.)

MARK. (*To* OLD LADY.) Good evening. (*To* CYNTHIA.) Good evening, Cynthia. (CYNTHIA *gives a slight bow from her chair.*)

OLD LADY. Come in, dear boy. Is Tony with you ?

MARK. (*Not interested.*) No, I—er—believe he is coming up later. As a matter of fact, I—er—wanted to have a word with you, Cynthia.

OLD LADY. Very well, I'll go.

MARK. No, please don't move. Perhaps Cynthia and I—— ?

CYNTHIA. We'll go next door. (*They excuse themselves and exeunt. After slight pause enter* MAID.)

MAID. Mr. Tony, madam.

(*Enter* TONY. *He, too, is young and in evening dress. His manner is much quieter than* MARK'S, *and he has a nice smile. Exit* MAID.)

TONY. (*Shyly advancing towards* OLD LADY.) Good evening, I just came in——

OLD LADY. (*Interrupting.*) To have a word with Cynthia—— ?

TONY. (*Smiling.*) Oh, so I am not the first. No, I really came up to thank you for the way in which you have looked after Cynthia since her father's death. You've been a brick to her. (OLD LADY *bows slightly and points to a chair. He sits.*) What's more, I'm afraid she'll have need of you yet. This will has put her in a very difficult position, as embarrassing for her as for us.

OLD LADY. You love her, too ?

TONY. I think I do, though very differently from Mark. (*Smiling.*) He is so very fierce about it.

OLD LADY. Well, Cynthia must make her own choice.

TONY. And may the better man win, but—if Mark should lose . . . I know Mark.

OLD LADY. You mean ?

TONY. Mark has never managed to learn how to take a beating gracefully.

(*Re-enter* CYNTHIA *and* MARK. TONY *gets up.*) But here they are. (CYNTHIA *crosses to* OLD LADY *and sits by her on the sofa.*)

OLD LADY. Well, dear ?

CYNTHIA. Mark has paid me the honour of proposing to me, but——

MARK. He was not successful. (TONY *looks meaningly at* OLD LADY. MARK *makes great effort to keep his temper.*) Some fellows seem to have all the luck. (*Scowling at his brother.*) Well, I suppose I am not

wanted now. I shall have to go and see about earning a living. That's the penalty of failure, and as I have failed I must pay. Lucky for Tony it was not he who lost. Writing books may be intellectual, but it's not lucrative. However, now that won't matter.

OLD LADY. Really, Mark! What are you talking about?

CYNTHIA. Mark, what do you mean?

MARK. You know quite well what I mean. Tony wasn't so solicitous for your welfare when your father was alive and well, was he? (*Shouting down protest.*) But when your father got ill and you were very worried, he suddenly found he could not do too much for you.

OLD LADY. Mark, this is preposterous. I insist on your apologising.

MARK. (*Sulkily.*) Why, when it's true? All he cares about is money——

TONY. (*Stung into anger.*) You cad!

MARK. Oh, I'm a cad, am I?
Well, I'll tell you what you are——

OLD LADY. Mark, will you be quiet?

MARK. (*Rudely.*) No, I won't.

(TONY *tries to quieten him by holding him.* MARK *wrenches himself free and raises an arm to strike.* TONY *cowers back with a gasp and almost shouts.*)

TONY. Don't! (*More quietly.*) For God's sake, don't! Oh—O—O! (MARK *drops his arm. A pause while all watch* TONY, *who is back against the wall, almost panting.*) That's what you did before—when we quarrelled over her—(*pointing to* CYNTHIA)—last time. (*To* OLD LADY.) And you were there too, somehow. (*Turning back to* MARK.) Only then you struck me here. (*Clutching his chest.*) And I remember no more. I suppose you had a knife, and I died. O God, it was horrible!

MARK. I'm sorry, everybody, for making such a fool of myself, but something seemed to possess me and I couldn't stop myself. I must be going mad.

TONY. No, it's not so bad as all that. I felt just as *you* did, as if we were re-enacting an old drama against our will. (*With a sweeping gesture.*) But it's got to stop, Mark, it's got to stop, and I'm going to end it here and now. I'm sick of hatred and rivalry, and fighting for money or—(*looking at* CYNTHIA)—anything else. I'm done with it, and that's that. You may hate me, Mark, and I think you do where Cynthia is concerned, but I feel no hatred for you, only a pity that you should still be bound, while I am now free, free, free. (*Pulling himself together, more quietly.*) Try to understand me, Cynthia. It's not your fault, nor have I anything to say against Mark as long as I am out of the way when you are there.

MARK. But you never are out of the way. (*Shamefacedly.*) If you were I shouldn't lose my temper. I never do any other time.

TONY. All right, Mark, I'm going right away this time, leaving you a clear field. (*To* CYNTHIA.) And if my advice carries any weight with you, Cynthia, I should accept him. (*Smiling.*) It is a woman's prerogative to change her mind. You will be very happy with him, far more so than with me. I'm a boorish sort of fellow, a dreamer and a bookworm, not at all the sort for you, really.

CYNTHIA. But Tony. (*With a helpless gesture.*) I don't know. Perhaps you are right.

TONY. I know I am. So we're all going to live happily ever after, eh ? At least, if you two don't find happiness it will not be for want of my wishing it you.

CYNTHIA. (*Giving way to his argument.*) What do you say, Auntie ? You've said nothing yet.

OLD LADY. My dear, I never interfere when other people are making decisions. If I do I make myself responsible for all the results of their decision, and that is sometimes most unpleasant ! Tony has made his decision. It remains for you to make yours. (CYNTHIA *looks helplessly indecisive.*)

MARK. (*Suddenly realising his opportunity.*) Say

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yes, Cynthia, say yes. (*Takes her hands and draws her to her feet.*)

CYNTHIA. (*After a moment's hesitation.*) I think—(*coyly*)—you had better ask me again—next door.

MARK. (*Overjoyed.*) You bet I will.

(*They move to door.* TONY *quietly draws aside curtain for them as they exeunt. Then he drops it behind them and turns to the* OLD LADY *with a wry smile. Then he suddenly raises his arms with a gesture of having at last done with it all. The* OLD LADY *nods understandingly.*)

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE

ISIS *discovered, as in the Prologue.*

ISIS. Silence, I tell ye, for the tale is not yet told. Your eyes have seen, your ears have heard, but have ye understood? Murder, ye say, is sinful. Aye, but where does murder end? What of the fierce intolerance of alien points of view; the bloodless wounding of a poisoned tongue by stabs of hatred aimed at an absent foe?

Which is the fouler, think ye, swift and open murder of this mortal clay, or sullen treachery? The clean hostility of rival thought, or lying semblance of a friendly smile to cloak the hidden murder of the mind? Which is the greater crime against true Brotherhood?

Think well on this. Search deep within your hearts before ye glibly say, "*I* would not slay my fellow men." Thy brother hates thee? So. Thy brother is a fool, but thou canst yet be wise. Obey the Law. Give open-handed love to him that hates thee, and his hate, for lack of nourishment, will die; for hatred ceaseth not by hatred, hatred ceaseth but by love. Remember this, and act accordingly.

Now go, and in the watches of the night, and in the days to come, remember, and so learn.

CURTAIN

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